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## GM to build electric motors in White Marsh

Expansion brings 180 jobs, needed boost to economy

January 27, 2010 | By Andrea K. Walker | [andrea.walker@balt.sun.com](mailto:andrea.walker@balt.sun.com)

General Motors Corp. has chosen its White Marsh plant for a new effort to build electric motors, and on Tuesday it laid out plans for an expansion that will generate 180 much-needed jobs and provide a boost for the hard-hit manufacturing sector.

The automaker, which would become the first car company to produce its own electric motors, announced that it plans to start making the devices in 2013. The company is investing \$246 million, including state funds and federal stimulus money, to construct a new 40,000-square-foot facility next to the site where workers now build transmissions, including some that go into hybrid vehicles.

The announcement was a welcome signal after many manufacturers have moved jobs overseas and most industries have shed jobs or pared back operations to cope with a general slowdown in the global economy. Maryland elected officials lined up next to corporate executives at the White Marsh plant to cheer the news.

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"We have not made enough announcements about creating new manufacturing jobs in America," said U.S. Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin. "We are making that announcement today."

The plant's work force will nearly double - from about 220 workers to 400 - mostly with manufacturing jobs once the new addition is up and running. The plant will have the capacity to build thousands of rear-wheel-drive components that each contain two electric motors and can be used in trucks and cars. A prototype of the motor was unveiled at the White Marsh plant Tuesday.

GM Vice Chairman Tom Stephens said the electric motor has the potential to eventually replace the gas-powered engine, and that the company's plan to build its own motors is key to capitalizing on that trend. The company now buys electric motors from suppliers, and officials believe that manufacturing them will help them better understand and improve motor quality.

"Our only level of competitive advantage is our ability to develop faster than the competition and apply it to great new vehicles," Stephens said.

GM has been quietly working on an electric-car strategy for the past decade through research, development and design at facilities in Michigan, Indiana and California. The company said there is now more demand from consumers for reliable, affordable models of the vehicles. The electric motor will be used in a variety of electronic models, including battery-electric vehicles and fuel-cell vehicles.

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Later this year, the company plans to bring to market the Chevrolet Volt. It debuted the electric, plug-in car at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit in 2007. The car will be able to run on an electric charge for up to 40 miles before it switches to a range-extending gas generator.

Tuesday's announcement also gives more certainty as to where the White Marsh plant fits into GM's corporate structure. The automaker has shut down dealers and plants across the country as it works to become a leaner company and more appealing to consumers. It closed a plant in Delaware last summer that made Pontiac and Saturn models. The White Marsh plant shut down for eight weeks last summer.

"It provides not only stability for the plant, but a future," said Gov. Martin O'Malley, who also attended the announcement.

Stephens said the White Marsh plant, which opened in 2000, was chosen because of its experience at building transmissions and electric drives.

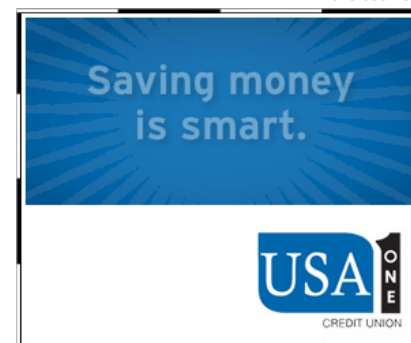
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The money to fund the expansion is coming from a variety of sources, including \$105 million in stimulus money directed last year to the plant and a second GM plant in Wixom, Mich. A total of \$2.4 billion in stimulus grants were earmarked for developing batteries and other parts for electric cars.

In addition, the state directed \$4.5 million to the White Marsh expansion, including \$1.5 million for training and \$3 million from the Maryland Economic Development Assistance Fund. Baltimore County is providing up to \$6 million in grants and \$150,000 to support training.

Labor union officials said the expansion demonstrates that stimulus funding is helping the economy recover. About 178 union workers now work at the plant. About 33 people have been laid off and will be brought back as production of its transmissions picks up - and that's before production of the electric motor ramps up.

"This means UAW will be retaining and adding jobs to secure our facility for the long term," said John Kimble, shop steward for the United Auto Workers local that represents workers at the plant.

Mike Galiazzo, executive director of the Regional Manufacturing Institute of Maryland, said the expansion will bolster a manufacturing sector that has been bleeding jobs, especially during the recent economic downturn.

"It's a bright spot," he said. "It's a good example of new technology creating new products which leads to jobs."

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The White Marsh plant "is really a spectacular operation," Galiazzo added. "When we look at what we already have here, to me it makes sense to ask us to play this pioneering role with GM."

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